

DOMINANT POLITICAL PARTIES, STRUGGLING FOR SURVIVAL IN NIGERIA: THE NARRATIVE OF DECAPITATED SLEAZE AND CRUSADE OF ANTI-CORRUPTION LEGITIMACY

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Abstract. This paper examines how the dominant political parties in a corruption-prone political system have been struggling for survival (and legitimacy) based on anti-corruption crusades and the attendant supports. The study has in the process, interrogated what may constitute the core concerns of the leading political parties, in such corruption-bedeveloped polities. The investigation is fundamentally, a case study of the Nigerian state. Accordingly, the central research questions of the paper are as follows: How are the two dominant political parties in Nigeria brawling for survival? Attendant to the wrestles, what is the fate of good governance in the country? The study finds that while the two dominant political parties are engaged in the scuffle to survive, a national vacuum is in contradiction, created in the area of general political mobilization. It has been posited in the paper that political parties' legitimacies are never constructed on single societal agenda. It is finally recommended in the work that while the government (in power) may be wedging wars against the debilitating sleaze in the system, the political parties (in order to survive and retain legitimacy) must continuously engage in the articulation and aggregation of politically complementary programmes and actions. This would not only lead to the survival of the parties as political entities but in a generic dimension, lead to the critically desired national growth and survival in such countries, where corruption still presents the overriding national challenge. The methodology of the paper is logical argumentation.

Introduction

The Nigerian state is truly a study in ironies. It critically conveys to observers, simultaneous hopes and despairs. It is a state of humongous natural endowments and a place of monumental despoilments of avoidable trajectories. In this state, political tragedies play out concurrently with political comedies. Patriotism in Nigeria, is consequently embedded in perfidies. It is hard to imagine a politico-economic shenanigan that has not been attempted in Nigeria, to demobilize the life-support paraphernalia of this nation-state. It is tough too, to contemplate a political-economy approach that has not been applied (to no avail) in reversing the comatose condition of this same state. In Nigeria, the two dominant political parties of today are the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and the All Progressives Congress (APC). As political parties, these two bodies have inherited the foregoing Nigerian tendencies and devastations. The PDP was precisely in power for sixteen years, from 1999 to 2015. It was a party of Nigerian political bigwigs. It has also taken the position of the political party that has suffered the greatest political defeat in the long history of Nigeria. The candidate of All Progressives Congress (APC), Muhammadu Buhari, in the 2015 Presidential Election, defeated President Goodluck Jonathan of the PDP. It was the first time a sitting Nigerian President would be defeated in an election. Therefore, APC is currently in power. Prior to this period, the party (APC) was considered immensely politically disadvantaged, over the PDP.

How are the two political parties brawling for survival? Attendant to the wrestles, what is the fate of good governance in Nigeria? These are the central research questions of this paper. The general objective of the study therefore is to examine how the two dominant political parties in a

corruption-prevalent state (Nigeria) are struggling for survival (one out of government and the other in power). A specific objective of the study is to make recommendation(s) on how the purposes of the dominant political parties in the study may lead to the engendering of good governance in the country's generic political system. The methodology of the study is logical argumentation.

The Peoples Democratic Party (PDP): From Monumental Size to Humongous Sleaze

The genesis of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Nigeria is traceable to the political regrouping that finally led to the exit of the military from the politics-administration hierarchies of this West African state. The Nigerian federation (previously ruled by Britain) became an independent state in October 1960. However, by 1966, politics of ethnicity, nepotism, gangsterism and kleptocracy had made it possible for some extremist class of Nigerian soldiers to topple the incipient government. Counter-revolutions followed, still toeing the lines of ethnic hate and inter-tribal animosities. Consequently, the country was enmeshed in a civil war, which pitted the Igbos (mainly) against the rest of the emergent Nigerian state. The Igbos constitutes one of the three major ethnic blocs in Nigeria. The others are the Hausa/Fulani and the Yoruba. At the end of the war (fought between July 1967 and January 1970), the soldiers remained in power. There were intermittent pretences to hand over to civilian politicians but the army usually returned to power. Essentially, the PDP was originated to precipitate the eventual withdrawal of the military from civil governance in Nigeria. Nigerian citizens accordingly placed a heavy measure of hope on the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP). The nation needed an accelerated pace of development, after the long years of military nightmares. The party of monumental size (PDP) continued to call itself the largest political party in Africa.

However, the PDP's leadership testimonial seems to be (ironically) tainted by monumental sleaze. According to Oluwasanmi [1] in Ijewereme [2], under the PDP's Olusegun Obasanjo Administration (1999 to 2007) corruption in Nigeria became all-pervading. Chief Obasanjo was succeeded by Alhaji Umaru Musa Yar' Adua (PDP). Hence, Aderonmu [3] and Ijewereme [4] in [2] conclude that President Umaru Musa Yar' Adua frequently reaffirmed his determination to fight corruption and proclaimed respect for the rule of law and due process, but the actions and body language of Yar' Adua depicted the opposite. They (Aderonmu / Ijewereme) argue specifically that during Yar' Adua's administration, the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of the Nigerian Federation, Mr. Micheal Aadoanka, worked fervently to undermine efforts in the fight against corruption in Nigeria. PDP's President Yar' Adua was succeeded by Dr Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. With regards to this administration (the Jonathan administration) Ijewereme [2] opines that corrupt practices continued to increase at a worrisome level since President Goodluck Jonathan assumed office and that the Jonathan administration displayed complete lack of political will, a high degree of lethargy and cluelessness in the fight against corruption, in the face of many corrupt practices reported frequently against government officials [2].

It further remains ironical therefore that on the specific question of corruption in Nigeria, the differences between the military dispensations and the civilian eras, particularly under the PDP administration have remained completely obscure. During his inauguration in 1999, PDP's Chief Olusegun Obasanjo promised to stamp out the corruption, which became a feature of the years of military rule in Nigeria [5]. Obasanjo had posited that one of the greatest tragedies of military rule (in Nigeria) in recent times was that corruption grew unchallenged and unchecked even when it was glaring for everyone to see [6]. Under PDP also, corruption became glaring for everyone to see. It was in the PDP period that Agbibo [7] argued that since independence in 1960, Nigeria's economic performance had remained decidedly unimpressive, on the account of corruption. In the military and the civilian eras therefore, the humongous natural endowments in Nigeria remained avoidably despoiled by mammoth sleaze. Corruption left Nigeria in a comatose condition.

The All Progressives Congress (APC): Situating Legitimacy on Anti-Corruption Crusade

The APC thus enters the scenario with anti-corruption campaigns and some goodwill arising therefrom. The party (APC) was singularly founded to wrench power from the PDP. According to the APC [8] formed in February 2013, the party is the result of an alliance by Nigeria's four biggest opposition parties - the Action Congress of Nigeria (ACN), the Congress for Progressive Change (CPC), the All Nigeria Peoples Party (ANPP), and a faction of the All Progressives Grand Alliance (APGA) - merged to take on the People's Democratic Party (PDP). We underscore the notion of *merged to take on the People's Democratic Party*. Differently denoted therefore, the APC was simply formed to defeat PDP at the polls. Thus, the APC is squarely neither a nationally pro-people party nor a fundamentally issues-based organization. The party thus is describable as an amalgam of anti-PDP politicians and political groupings who came to power, devoid of easily discernible and comprehensive programme of actions intended to be implemented differently from PDP methodologies, except on the issue of corruption. The 2016 appropriation bill presented to the Nigerian National Assembly by the Buhari administration has even been faulted on the grounds of its synonyms with a previous PDP budget. According to Chukwuma Soludo, a former Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the 2016 budget of the APC administration, is a carbon copy of one of former (PDP) President Goodluck Jonathan's budgets. He argues that it has the same high level of recurrent expenditure-component and curiously has the same percentage of budget deficit, which stood at 37 per cent [9, 10].

The political roots of many notable APC members are traceable to the PDP. The Director-General of the APC Presidential Campaign Organization for the 2015 Presidential Election, Hon Rotimi Amaechi was a founder member of the PDP. The APC President of the Nigerian Senate, Dr Bukola Saraki was a pioneer member of the PDP. The current Governor of Nigeria's Sokoto state, Hon Aminu Tambuwal, Speaker of Nigeria's House of Representatives (2011 to 2015), started out as Speaker on the platform of the PDP. However, after defecting to the APC in 2014, he succeeded in remaining Speaker of the House till the end of the Seventh National Assembly in Nigeria. And in the South East of the country, Mr Rochas Okorocha, the APC Governor of the country's Imo state (the only APC Governor in the Southeast) was a long standing member of the PDP. (The Nigerian federation is made up of thirty-six states and the Central Government. Each of the states has a Governor and there are five states in the Southeast). Furthermore, from this geo-political region of the Nigerian state (the Southeast), Dr Chris Ngige, the nation's current Minister for Labour and Productivity (one of the noteworthy APC members from this region) was also a founder member of the PDP, under which platform he was Governor of Nigeria's Anambra state. Consequently, the PDP-APC relations present a basic template of ironies and other templates of subterfuges.

Corruption consequently, remains a gargantuan problem in the socio-political and economic affairs of Nigeria. The abundance of academic and lay literature on the issue of corruption in Nigeria testifies to the accuracy of this assertion [11-20]. Currently in Nigeria therefore, the APC behaves as if to be in government is the sole purpose of power and the only ancillary matter is to fight corruption, interpretable in the contexts of the APC, as teaching the rival Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) a political lesson. The truth is that since independence in 1960 to the current dispensations in the Nigerian state, an eternally fitting classificatory tag for the generic political class in the country is: corruption-infested. The APC therefore concludes that the party is in government to fight corruption. The irony however is that the APC is a function of the Nigerian corrupt political class. Thus, APC's tendencies towards readiness for ethical self-immolation have consequently remained politically dubious.

It is self-evident that each of the innumerable corruption cases in Nigeria's socio-political and economic history is usually incredulous on its own. To commence its version of the war against this societal malaise, the APC government chose what has become known as the \$2.2 billion Arms Purchase Scandal. The facts of the arms purchase abracadabra are as follows: An apparently terrorist group (more commonly called insurgent group) emerges in Nigeria. They go by the alias of Boko Haram (Book is forbidden). They kill, maim, destroy, annihilate and brutalize, particularly in the

North Eastern part of Nigeria where they subsequently concentrated attention, having been appreciably routed out of Nigeria's Federal Capital Territory (in Abuja) and other Northern Nigerian cities [21-24]. The capacity of the devious and deadly group to unleash mass-murder and environmental destruction, overwhelms the Nigerian military. To fight back and defeat Boko Haram, the PDP government (under President Jonathan) appropriates the sum of \$2.2 billion for the purchase of arms for the Nigerian military. The funds were to be utilized by the Office of the National Security Adviser (Sambo Dasukki) for this purpose. Hence, the Arms Purchase case in Nigeria also goes by the sobriquet, Dasukkiagate. Subject funds were however, believed to have been dubiously dismembered. Boko Haram accordingly continued to defeat the Nigerian military at the battle front and lives of Nigerian citizens were being increasingly lost (wasted tragically on daily basis by Boko Haram) at the other theaters of terrorism, while some politically connected individuals were busy sharing the arms purchase fund, turning the entire allocation into a source of political bazaar and boom of sleaze [25-29].

It remains the truth that by deciding to take on corruption, from a formerly no-go area of national security, by investigating how the funds appropriated for national security were expended by a previous regime, the APC-led government has monumentally decapitated sleaze in the Nigerian state. The party thus conveys hope to the citizens, via her political intentions. However, is it correct to conclude that the parading of treasury looters on national network television-stations and showing to the domestic and international audiences, how the cases of skullduggery are mentioned in the courts, are central to seminal leadership? Indeed, if the APC's hope for survival as a political party in Nigeria is only hoisted on the Muhammadu Buhari-led government's crusade against corruption (an otherwise worthwhile crusade), then the political party's hope is rested on a doubtful foundation. Political parties' legitimacies are never constructed on single agendum. Let us take an analogy. When the African National Congress (ANC) ultimately came to power in apartheid South Africa, in addition to dismantling apartheid, it also came with a unique and deep-rooted complement of national reconciliation and harmonious integration.

For Political Parties: The Purpose of Power

Why do politicians seek power? In our current context, why do political parties seek power? These have remained perturbing political questions in Nigeria (and elsewhere). Hence, political progress and national emancipation usually find explanations within the milieu of these political posers and their nuances. For a political party, can an anti-corruption crusade constitute the purpose of power? Governments in corruption-endemic states may have as cardinal policy objective, an anti-corruption crusade but for a political party, to fight corruption cannot be the central purpose of power.

Indeed, there is a curious dimension to the presidential system of government in Nigeria. It is found in what the politicians have perceived as opposition politics and the mass media assists the political system in celebrating this curiosity. This Nigerian opposition-politics is a peculiar type of hybridism between the parliamentary and presidential systems of government. Under the parliamentary system of government, the opposition party has an alternative programme of action, to the policies of the party in power and as soon as there is a vote of no confidence, the ruling party bows out for the opposition to take over. There is an official Leader of the Opposition. Under a presidential system (which is ostensibly practiced in the Nigerian federation), the President is the Head of State and Head of Government till the next election, except if he becomes impeached or any other situation of force majeure occurs. But in the Nigerian presidential system, what is constantly regarded as the opposition is abundantly celebrated. The APC was regarded as this opposition and currently it is the PDP. The Presidential System of government in Nigeria is elaborately created in line with the American Model. But on this issue of the opposition, the party-practices are immensely divergent. Reference is usually made in the United States' model to either the Democrats or the Republicans. The Nigerian political culture however prefers 'the opposition', in reference to such other political parties. Hence, as the two dominant political parties struggle for survival, simultaneously hoisting hopes and despairs on the polity, alternating as dubious and

debilitating opposition, a national vacuum is created whereby true political mobilization (an otherwise primary engagement of the political parties) is made a secondary issue.

In further struggling for survival, what the PDP has intriguingly done is to begin to support the anti-corruption crusade of the APC-led government, while still claiming to be in opposition. According to Ukaibe [30] the Deputy National Publicity Secretary of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Alhaji Abdullahi Jalo, has exonerated the party from the armgate scandal, challenging party chieftains implicated in the matter (many of such PDP leaders have been implicated) to declare whether or not they collected those monies for the PDP. In Tukur [31] some national officers of the PDP called on all relevant members and organs of the party to rescue it from fortune-hunters (referring to the party's key officers who have been implicated in the arms purchase case), describing them as people who had hijacked the very soul of PDP. The PDP (of all parties) is consequently vying for legitimacy, based on anti-corruption support. Hence, we begin to witness the scenario of political tragedies playing out concurrently with political comedies. We begin to encounter the possibilities of patriotism embedded in perfidies. However, the critical question that arises is: what was precisely the corruption-impeding content of the PDP's political economy template for the Nigerian state in the sixteen years preceding APC's ascendancy to power? The two dominant political parties are only struggling for self-centered survival.

Corruption is undoubtedly an incredible societal evil. However, it is posited in this study that something is still fundamentally wrong in a society where the war against corrupt leaders (by prosecuting such leaders in the law courts) is the only game in town. An effective war against corruption in any political system must possess complementary trajectories. For instance, the ostensible Nigerian federation is evidently center-dominated. National resources (national financial resources) in Nigeria are accordingly massively accumulated at the center [32-35]. Consequently, corruption has historically accumulated at the center in the country. A worthwhile war against sleaze in the nation therefore must have as core-component, the dismantling of the structures of fiscal federalism, which makes national corruption a central politico-economic pastime. In this regard, while the government conducts its crusades against (previous) corrupt leaders, the political parties may begin to be engaged in the (re)articulation and aggregation of opinions on fiscal federalism in Nigeria, preparatory to squarely invading the breeding ground of corruption. Political parties may accordingly have, being in government as motivation. However, having obtained power, to what purpose should it be deployed by political parties? Is it merely to fight some *de jure* and other imaginary oppositions?

Conclusion

In concluding this work, we highlight that a youth group, within the PDP has called on leaders of the party to strongly consider a merger with the subaltern political parties in the country and consequently changing the name of the party (PDP). According to the group, a complete overhaul of the party's entire system must occur. The leaders of the party, undergoing criminal investigation (in the arms purchase voila) the group argues, must be disciplined and expelled. The (PDP) group described the war against graft by the administration of President Muhammadu Buhari, as a welcome development that is long overdue. The embattled party men called on President Buhari to enlarge the scope of the war against corruption and make it all-inclusive [36]. Is it a case of decapitated sleaze being born again? Or one of those Nigerian peculiar curiosities?

In any case, we also posit in conclusion that the impeding of the forces of corruption may finally feature in the manifesto of a political party. It must not however constitute the party's *raison d'être* of seeking political power. Furthermore, public sector corruption, as symbolized in the PDP may have been decapitated in the Nigerian state. Nevertheless, to snuff out life from generic political corruption in any state, can never be a political tea party. It truly requires socio-economic complementarities. In other words, to legitimize the position of a political party in power, in a corruption-endemic state would require more than anti-corruption wars and the attendant refrains.

The emerging scenario further portrays more criticalities when in struggling for survival by the dominant political parties, the particular entity thought to be more corruption-prone, reverses itself to begin to re-echo the reigning anti-sleaze mantra in the nation. It is finally recommended in this work that while the government (in power) may be waging wars against the debilitating dishonesties in the system, the political parties (in order to survive and retain legitimacy) must continuously engage in the articulation and aggregation of politically complementary policies, programmes and actions. It is the only way of usually knowing the numero uno among the parties and it is the only way of engendering good governance in the generic political system.

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